

James O'Brien Homestead
(Clarkson Spain Residence)
Montana Secondary Highway 411
4.5 Miles Northwest of Bozeman
Bozeman Vicinity
Gallatin County
Montana

HABS No. MT-83

HABS
MONT
16-BOZ.V,
1-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historical American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MT-83

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James O'Brien Homestead

Location: The James O'Brien Homestead (Clarkson Spain Farmstead) is located 4.5 miles northwest of Bozeman, Montana on Montana Secondary 411 (Springhill Road) in the NE 1/4, SW 1/4, NW 1/4 of Section 14 in Township 1 South, Range 5 East.

UTMs: Zone: 12 Easting: 494 780 Northing: 5065 880

Present Owner: Kathleen Madden

Present Occupant: Kathleen Madden

Statement of

Significance: This Gallatin Valley property was an early area homestead and has been a ranch site since that time. As such, it is representative of the historic agricultural development in the area. It is also significant because of its association with Clarkson Spain, one of the leading farmer/ranchers in the Gallatin Valley during the second quarter of the twentieth century. The residence displays excellent integrity of design, materials and workmanship and features such detailing as Doric-style porch columns, decorative shingles used in the gable-ends and nine-over-one double-hung windows.

Prepared By: Jon Axline,
Historian
Montana Department of Highways
March 18, 1991

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Erection: circa 1919-1928

Architect: Unknown

Historical Narrative: The Lewis and Clark Expedition stopped briefly at the Three Forks of the Missouri River in July, 1805 before proceeding to the Pacific Ocean. The following summer in 1806, William Clark led a small group through the Gallatin Valley and crossed Bozeman Pass into the Yellowstone Valley. Clark's description of the Gallatin Valley as containing "emence [sic] quantities of beaver" lured fur trappers to the area by 1807. In 1810, the Missouri Fur Company established a trading post, called Henry's Fort or Three Forks Post, at the confluence of the Gallatin and Jefferson rivers. The hostility of Blackfeet and Atsina (Gros Ventre) Indians, however, forced the closure of the post several months later. Despite the Indian opposition to the fur trade in the area, "mountain men" from the American Fur and Rocky Mountain Fur companies desultorily trapped the Gallatin Valley for nearly two decades. By the late 1830s, disease had

decimated the Blackfeet and Atsinas, allowing the fur companies to actively exploit the valley.¹

The discovery of gold at Grasshopper Creek in 1862 initiated the agricultural development of the Gallatin Valley. As the productive placer claims were taken, many would-be miners turned to agricultural production for survival. The mining camps provided markets for wheat and barley grown by farmers in the near-by Gallatin Valley. Like the fur trade, agricultural activities were initially concentrated in the Three Forks area. In 1862, the Bannack-based Gallatin Town Company established Gallatin City near the Three Forks and attempted to sell lots to potential farmers. The Three Forks venture, however, failed. The opening of the Bozeman Road and the establishment of Bozeman City caused agricultural activity to shift to the east Gallatin Valley in 1864. Since the valley had not yet been surveyed by the General Land Office, land claims in the valley were primarily through Squatter's Rights. Gallatin Valley farmers sold their products to the mining camps located north and west of the area and to the military forts on the Bozeman Road. In 1867, the United States government established Fort Ellis three miles east of Bozeman. The fort provided a steady market for valley farmers for nearly twenty years. The military and the mining camps provided the primary source of revenue to Gallatin Valley farmers until the end of the century.²

By 1864, agriculture operations were established in the Springhill area. The first flour mills were located near there and the first irrigation ditches dug by the Penwell Brothers in the late 1860s. Wheat raised in the area was milled at either Springhill or Bozeman. With the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883, agriculture boomed in the Springhill District.³ Agriculture flourished in the Gallatin Valley throughout the 1870s. During the 1880s, however, the railroad initiated the rapid expansion of copper and silver mining in the Butte and Helena areas--one hundred miles from Gallatin Valley. The Northern Pacific Railroad allowed local farmers to cheaply ship their produce to the mining camps and to markets in the midwest and west coast. The industrialization of Montana attracted hundreds of homesteaders to the Gallatin valley throughout the 1880s.⁴

In 1882, Irish immigrant James O'Brien patented a 160 acre homestead approximately 4.5 miles northwest of Bozeman in the Springhill District. A teamster, O'Brien arrived in the Gallatin Valley in 1879. He constructed several structures on the property--all of which had been removed or destroyed by the 1930s. Along with his brother, Thomas, O'Brien farmed the

property until 1886, when he sold it to James R. Martin. Martin sold the property to F. K. and Lora Armstrong in 1905. The Armstrongs increased the size of the homestead to 270 acres.⁵

The Armstrongs leased the property to Alburn and Minnie Walton in 1910. The Waltons, who purchased the property in 1914, made only minimal improvements to the farm since the assessed value increased from \$4,835 in 1910 to only \$6,320 in 1919. By 1922, however, the value of the homestead had nearly tripled to \$18,040, indicating that significant improvements had been made to the property. Evidence suggests, therefore, that the residence and many of the outbuildings were constructed between 1919 and 1922. The house is typical of dwellings constructed in the Springhill area during the first quarter of the 20th century. In 1926, the Waltons hired Clarkson Spain as a farm hand. Two years later, in 1928, Spain purchased the homestead.⁵

Biographical Information - Clarkson Spain

Born near Belgrade in 1900, Clarkson Spain worked on the family farm and attended Montana State College prior to his employment with the Waltons. After purchasing the Walton Farm in 1928, Spain expanded the acreage from 270 acres to nearly 1,000 acres. He raised wheat, hay and a small cattle herd. Although there were numerous irrigation systems in the Springhill area, the Spain Farmstead was a dry land farming operation. By the late 1930s, Spain had purchased a second farm in the Bridger Canyon area northeast of Bozeman.⁶

Clarkson Spain was active in the formulation and administration of farm policy in Montana during the 1940s and early 1950s. He served as a member of the Agricultural Adjustment Agency (AAA) Executive Committee from 1940 to 1944. He was administrative assistant for the AAA in a 10-county area from 1944 to 1947. Spain was president of the Montana Farm Bureau from 1947 to 1953. He was killed in a farm accident in September, 1954.⁷

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Information

1. Summary Description:

The Clarkson Spain Farmstead consists of seven features associated with the operation of a farm from circa 1919 to 1954. The residence is typical of agricultural dwellings in the

Springhill District. The outbuildings and barns are also typical of early 20th century agricultural operations in western Montana. The buildings are wood frame with gable roofs and novelty siding. Some have decorative features such as corner boards and exposed rafters. The Clarkson Spain Farmstead is representative of agriculture in western Montana.

A. Structure #1: Residence

Structure #1 is a one and one-half story wood frame late Queen Anne-style residence with a cross-gable plan. The building is sheathed in clapboard with corner boards and square-butt shingling on the gable-ends. The house faces northeast. The roof is sheathed with composition shingles. The eaves have corniced fascia and plain wood trim boards. There is an open-air wrap-around porch on the front with a hip roof supported by Doric-style wood columns. The porch deck is wood and is reached by a single wood step. The porch is partially in-filled on the north and south sides and has a wood foundation. The entry is central to the front and is reached through the porch. There is an interior brick chimney and an exterior multi-colored brick chimney on the north. Windows are to be nine-over-one double-hung, except on the in-filled porch sections where they are one-over-one double-hung and fixed. A shed roof dormer is located on the west. The dormer has wood-shingle siding, corner boards and a one-over-one double-hung window. The residence rests on a concrete foundation.

A hip roof addition is located on the rear of the dwelling. The addition has clapboard siding and corner boards. The eaves also have corniced fascia. The roof is sheathed with composition shingles. The entry is located on the north side of the addition and is reached by a concrete step. The addition has both nine-over-one double-hung or one-over-one double-hung windows.

B. Structure #2: Garage

Structure #2 is a two-bay brick garage with wood paneled overhead doors. The gable-roof building has a square plan and faces west. The overhanging eaves are supported by exposed rafters and have plain wood soffits. There is a six-light fixed window on the side and the bay doors have single-light fixed windows. The gable roof is sheathed with composition shingles. The garage is built into a west-facing hillside.

C. Structure #3: Shed

Structure #3 is a small wood frame gable roof storage shed with

fiberglass siding, horizontal board siding on the gable-ends and corniced fascia on the eaves. The shed has a wood floor and a wood ramp leading to the entry. No foundation is visible.

D. Structure #4: Shed/bunkhouse

Structure #4 is a wood frame shed/bunkhouse with a gable roof over a rectangular plan. The building rests on a concrete foundation and is built into a west-facing hillside. The shed is sheathed with novelty siding with corner boards and a water table. The roof is sheathed with wood shingles and has plain wood soffits. The window is four-over-four double-hung and is located on the north side. There is a boarded-over window on the west side. The entry is located on the east and there are wood double-leaf doors located on the west.

E. Structure #5: Shed

Structure #5 is a rectangular wood frame storage shed with a shed roof. The shed faces west. The building is sheathed in corrugated metal with no visible foundation. There is a sliding metal door on the front of the building. The roof is supported by wood purlins. A cattle chute is located adjacent to the shed on the north and a corral is located on the south of the building.

F. Structure #6: Stock Barn

Structure #6 is a rectangular wood frame stock barn with a salt box roof, novelty siding and corner boards. The roof is sheathed with wood shingles. The south side of the barn has vertical board doors with screen "windows." The sliding doors are mounted on metal tracks. Windows are either partially in-filled or are boarded-over. There is an octagonal screened window on the front of the building. The barn faces south.

G. Structure #7: Hay Barn

Structure #7 is a post and beam construction hay barn with a shed roof and diagonal log support pieces.

H. Site and Surroundings

1). **Orientation and General Setting:** The site is located in the Gallatin Valley in the foothills of the Bridge Mountains near Bozeman, Montana. The East Fork of the Gallatin River is located approximately 3,200 feet west of the site. The valley is bordered by the Gallatin and Madison mountain ranges to the south and the Tobacco Root and Elkhorn Mountains on the east.

Interstate 90 and U. S. Highway 10 are located south of the site. The Clarkson Spain Residence is located on Springhill Road, a small farm-to-market road connecting the railroad station at Bozeman with the agricultural communities of Springhill and Maudlow. The site is generally oriented north to south.

PART III. SOURCES OF PROJECT INFORMATION

Montana Department of Highways plans call for the demolition of Structure #2 because of its location in relation to the proposed highway reconstruction. It is, moreover, in too deteriorated of a condition to relocate. The structure was razed in 1990. No other structures at this site will be adversely affected by the highway reconstruction project.

PART IV. ENDNOTES

1. Bernard DeVoto. The Journals of Lewis and Clark. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 163-170, 449; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed. Original Journals of Lewis and Clark, 1804-1806. Volume 5, Part II. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1905), 261; Merrill Burlingame. Gallatin County's Heritage: A Report of Progress, 1805-1976. (Bozeman: Gallatin County Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 2-4; Michael Malone and Richard Roeder. Montana: A History of Two Centuries. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 41-42.
2. Burlingame. Gallatin County's Heritage, 4-6; Dorothy M. Johnson. The Bloody Bozeman: The Perilous Trail to Montana's Gold. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971), 141; E. Lina Houston. Early History of Gallatin County. (Bozeman: Bozeman Chronicle Printer, 1933), 20-25; Heritage Research Center. "Cultural Resource Inventory: Springhill Road, Gallatin County, Montana [RS 411-1(1)0]". (Missoula: Heritage Research Center, 1985), 8-10.
3. Malone and Roeder. Montana, 129-133; Muriel Sibell Wolle. Montana Pay Dirt. (Denver: Sage Books, 1962), 46; Heritage Research Center. "Cultural Research Inventory: Springhill Road", 28.
4. Burlingame. Gallatin County's Heritage, 15, 72; Malone and Roeder, Montana, 140-147.
5. Homestead Certificate No. 210. Clerk and Records Office, Gallatin County Courthouse, Bozeman, Montana.

6. According to a study made of Gallatin Valley homesteads in 1984, the majority of residences constructed in the district were one and one-half story frame structures with intersecting gable roofs. The study also determined that many of the buildings were constructed by homesteaders who also worked as carpenters in the area. K. W. Karsmizki, et al. Gallatin Valley Homestead Survey. Volume 1. (Bozeman: Museum of the Rockies, 1984), 11
7. Heritage Research Center, "Cultural Resource Inventory: Springhill Road", 28; Bozeman Daily Chronicle, September 10, 1954; Montana Water Resources Survey: Gallatin County. (Helena: State Engineer's Office, 1953), 6-8.
8. Bozeman Daily Chronicle, September 10, 1954; Heritage Research Center. "Cultural Resource Inventory: Springhill Road", 28.

PART V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- _____. Gallatin County's Heritage: A Report of Progress, 1805 - 1976. (Bozeman: Gallatin County Bicentennial Committee, 1976).
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Montana's Gold. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971).
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volumes. (Bozeman: Museum of the Rockies, 1984).
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Engineer's Office, 1953).
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